

Pastoral Letter from Rev. Gary Oba

West Los Angeles United Methodist Church

Dear family of faith,

These are troubling times. The coronavirus has upended the lives of nearly everyone. Businesses have closed; lines are long for the essential services that remain open; and people have been ordered to stay home. We are not able to assemble as a church.

If you have felt anxiety, fear, anger, or dismay during this period, you are not alone. We wonder when this will end and yearn for a return to normalcy.

There are encouraging signs on the horizon. The “curve” is flattening in China and South Korea. Civic leaders are trying their best to provide direction. Our health care system, stretched to its limits, has been mobilized.

We have the resources of our faith to draw upon. We believe in a God who walks with us through the darkest valleys. Our God is a “mighty fortress” whose gates we can enter through prayer. I find comfort in the opening verses of Psalm 46:

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea.*

We are not without power at this time. We can deepen relationships with family members at home or spend time in spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and reading. We can fulfill the command to love our neighbor by staying in touch with church members through phone calls, emails, text messages, and cards. We can thank those who provide us with “essential” services, such as the grocery store clerk, mail carrier, and bank teller.

These are times of great testing, but they will pass. The angels of God will bring us safely through them.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Gary